



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

Office of Inspector General

Enhancing Public Trust in Government

Redacted Investigative Report 2011-0087 September 18, 2015

Keith R. Parks
Inspector General

Amie H. Young, J.D.
Chief of Investigations

*"Provide leadership in the promotion of
accountability and integrity of State Government."*



Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and
Advance Personal and Family Recovery



Mike Carroll
Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Investigative Report
Case Number: 2011-0087



Keith R. Parks
Inspector General

INTRODUCTION

Section 409.996, Florida Statutes (F.S.), directs the Department of Children and Families (Department) to contract with lead agencies for the delivery, administration, or management of care for children in the child protection and child welfare system.¹ The Department contracts with lead CBC agency Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. (Our Kids) through contract #KJ114 (effective July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2014).² Pursuant to the contract, Our Kids provides foster care, case management, and related services in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties (Circuit 11). To help provide those services, Our Kids subcontracts (Contract #FCMA-2009-CHS-003; effective July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010³) with Children's Home Society, Inc. (CHS).

On August 19, 2011, Jolie Bogorad (the Foster Parent) reported to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) that CHS Court Liaison Joseph Corej misrepresented to the Department and CHS employees, by allegedly falsifying legal documents, that she (the Foster Parent) agreed to become the Permanent Guardian (PG) of 17-year-old [REDACTED] (the Child), when in fact she never agreed to such an arrangement.⁴ According to the Foster Parent, sometime during the summer of 2010 (exact date unknown), CHS Dependency Case Manager (DCM) Marda Delgado⁵ inquired if she (the Foster Parent) would be interested in becoming the Child's PG. The Foster Parent noted that she informed Ms. Delgado that although she (the Foster Parent) was not interested in becoming the Child's PG, Ms. Delgado was welcome to provide her (the Foster Parent) with general information concerning permanent guardianship; however, the Foster Parent related that she never received such information. The Foster Parent further related that approximately four months later (exact date unknown), Mr. Corej called and advised her that she (the Foster Parent) was in fact the Child's legal PG and subsequently provided her with documentation reflecting that she was granted permanent guardianship on January 4, 2011. The Foster Parent advised that she believes Mr. Corej falsified documents in order for this arrangement to be finalized, as she never signed any documentation and was never advised of or attended any hearing regarding the matter.

¹ Effective July 1, 2014, § 409.996, F.S., superseded § 409.1671, F.S., which directed the Department to outsource the provision of foster care and related services statewide. "Lead agency," also referred to as "Community-Based Care (CBC) lead agency," is defined by § 409.986, F.S., as a single entity with which the Department has a contract for the provision of care for children in the child protection and child welfare system in a community that is no smaller than a county and no larger than two contiguous judicial circuits.

² Amendment #0023 extends Contract #KJ114 through June 30, 2019.

³ Amendment #9 extends Contract #FCMA-2009-CHS-003 through July 31, 2015.

⁴ The Child was placed with the Foster Parent on October 2, 2009, where he remains.

⁵ Effective October 10, 2010, Ms. Delgado was no longer employed with CHS.

ALLEGATION AND FINDINGS**Allegation**

Children's Home Society, Inc. Court Liaison Joseph Corej falsified child protective records and misrepresented to the Dependency Court that a foster parent agreed to become a foster child's permanent guardian, (resulting in the foster child being deprived of court-ordered tutoring). If supported, the allegation would constitute a violation of Attachment I, A. 2a., b.(1) and (2), c. and d., Contract #KJ114, between the Department and Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.; Attachment III., A., B. i.b., g., and i., and E., i.a., d. and D., Contract # FCMA-2009-CHS-003, between Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. and Children's Home Society, Inc.; Amendment 1, Section 1. a. and (c), the Service Agreement between Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. and Children's Home Society, Inc.; and a potential violation of §839.13(2)(a) and (c), F.S.

Findings

The information obtained **supports** the allegation.

Testimony of the Foster Parent

In addition to the information initially provided to the OIG and contained in the Introduction section of this report, the Foster Parent advised that, upon Mr. Corej informing her via telephone (exact date unknown) that she was in fact the Child's PG, she requested that Mr. Corej provide her with the paperwork reflecting this, to which he complied shortly thereafter (exact date unknown⁶). Upon reviewing the paperwork, she discovered that it indicated that on January 4, 2011, the Court ordered that she have legal permanent guardianship of the Child. She subsequently made telephone contact (exact date unknown) with Mr. Corej, who said that she had agreed to the arrangement. She again advised him that she had not. According to Mr. Corej, she was neither required to attend the hearing nor sign any documentation in order to be granted permanent guardianship. Mr. Corej then stated, "What's the big deal? This has nothing to do with you. All [the Child's] benefits will remain the same." The Foster Parent stopped receiving the Child's foster care subsidy sometime in February 2011 (exact date unknown); however, she noted that she did not realize this until April 2011. Sometime during 2010 (exact date unknown⁷), the Court ordered tutoring services for the Child; however, the Child had not been receiving the services due to permanent guardianship being ordered. The Foster Parent subsequently made telephone contact with Our Kids Southern Region Manager Greg Penn in June 2011 (exact date unknown⁸) in an attempt to reinstate the Child's Medicaid and monthly subsidy (both of which had ceased the month after she became the Child's PG). She also spoke with CHS Program Director Marcel Rivas and CHS Dependency Case Manager Supervisor

⁶ The Foster Parent stated that Mr. Corej left said paperwork in her mailbox; however, she indicated she was unable to recall on what date.

⁷ Later determined to be November 23, 2010.

⁸ The Foster Parent explained that although she realized in April 2011 that the Child's subsidy had ceased, she was unable to contact Our Kids and CHS until sometime during June 2011, as she is a teacher and the end of the school year (May 2011 and June 2011) was a very busy time for her.

Lorna Fletcher, but indicated that she did not receive assistance with this matter until late August 2011 (exact date unknown).⁹

Testimony of Center for Family and Child Enrichment, Inc. (CFCE) Dependency Case Manager Marda Delgado

Prior to being employed at CHS,¹⁰ Ms. Delgado was employed with Kids Hope United, Inc., and was the Child's DCM for five years. Because the Child's permanency goal was Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA¹¹), she spoke with the Foster Parent on multiple occasions (exact dates unknown¹²) regarding permanent guardianship. She mentioned permanent guardianship to the Foster Parent due to the intent that the Child be in the most permanent placement possible; however, she is not familiar with the specific requirements of permanent guardianship.¹³ Although she and the Foster Parent discussed permanent guardianship on several occasions, the Foster Parent never related to her that she was in fact interested in becoming the Child's PG. Ms. Delgado noted, "It is a possibility that [the Foster Parent] requested information and I failed to provide it, but I felt so strongly about the Child having a permanent placement. I would think that I would have definitely provided it to [the Foster Parent]." She does not recall Mr. Corej being involved with the case during her time as the Child's DCM.

Testimony of CHS Case Manager Supervisor Guillermo Oeding

Both DCMs and dependency case manager supervisors (DCMSs) are tasked with discussing the most permanent, least-restrictive placements with foster parents, to impress upon them that the most permanent goal is best for the child. If reunification and adoption are not feasible goals, permanent guardianship is the next permanency goal explored; if this goal is accepted by the court, it is customary that CHS will staff the case with Our Kids and initiate the process by completing a permanent guardianship packet.

Concerning the Child, Mr. Oeding is unaware if the case was staffed with Our Kids or if a packet was submitted, as DCMSs are not usually involved in this process.¹⁴

Concerning Chronological Note #118284637, he expressed the opinion that Mr. Corej should have addressed and explained permanent guardianship with the Foster Parent

⁹ Ms. Fletcher advised that sometime in the Summer of 2011, Mr. Penn directed her to call the Foster Parent and address her (the Foster Parent's) concerns regarding no longer receiving a foster care subsidy and therefore no longer being able to financially support the Child. She stated that the Foster Parent was not aware that she (the Foster Parent) was the Child's PG, and because of this, sometime thereafter (exact date unknown), a conference call was held to address resolving the issue.

¹⁰ Ms. Delgado stated that she was employed with CHS from June 2010 through October 2010 and was the Child's DCM during this time.

¹¹ According to the Department website, "APPLA is planned and is intended to establish permanency for a child through a supportive relationship with a significant adult or adults that the court is satisfied will endure over time."

¹² Ms. Delgado explained that while employed as a DCM with Kids Hope United, she discussed possible permanent guardianship with the Foster Parent on several occasions. Ms. Delgado further explained that she did so due to child welfare workers being responsible to find the most permanent, least-restrictive placement for a child.

¹³ The OIG review of FSFN records revealed that all Chronological Notes documented by Ms. Delgado, beginning February 9, 2006 through October 4, 2010, reflect that the Child's permanency goal remained APPLA.

¹⁴ Mr. Oeding noted that the Child's dependency case was accepted by CHS sometime during August 2010 (exact date unknown) and was subsequently assigned to Ms. Delgado. He related that upon Ms. Delgado's separation from employment with CHS, there was no assigned DCM; however, he explained that Mr. Ferrer conducted case management activities until closure on January 4, 2011.

prior to filing a new case plan goal of permanent guardianship. Upon conducting his supervisory review (exact date unknown¹⁵), he observed Chronological Notes documented by him, Ms. Delgado, and Mr. Ferrer indicating that APPLA was, and had been, the Child's permanency goal. However, Mr. Corej documented conflicting information reflecting that he entered a new case plan with the goal of permanent guardianship.¹⁶ Because of the contradictory documentation, he (Mr. Oeding) made telephone contact (exact date unknown¹⁷) with the Foster Parent. The Foster Parent advised him that she was not interested in becoming the Child's PG and had not agreed to such an arrangement.¹⁸ Although he did document this in FSN after the conversation, he failed to inform anyone of the conflicting information.¹⁹

Sometime in January 2011 (exact date unknown), he received e-mail correspondence from Mr. Corej indicating that the Child's case was closed due to the Foster Parent becoming his (the Child's) PG. Upon receipt of Mr. Corej's e-mail, he made telephone contact (exact date unknown) with Mr. Corej to confirm this information. Mr. Corej assured him that he (Mr. Corej) had a great relationship with the Foster Parent and that she did in fact want to become the Child's PG. After his conversation with Mr. Corej, he did not contact the Foster Parent to confirm this with her, despite her (the Foster Parent) previously relating to him that she did not want to become the Child's PG.²⁰ He had no further involvement with the Child's case.

Testimony of CHS Case Manager Sergio Ferrer

Mr. Ferrer conducted two home visits at the Foster Parent's residence; sometime during November 2010 and December 2010 (exact dates unknown²¹). He was never assigned to the case, but he conducted the visits as a favor for Mr. Oeding. Although he cannot recall specific case information, he agreed that FSN records documented by him indicate that APPLA was the Child's permanency goal.²² He and the Foster Parent did not discuss permanent guardianship, but during his involvement with the Child's case, Mr. Corej was also involved and attended dependency court proceedings (exact dates unknown²³).

Testimony of Attorney ad Litem Javier Reyes²⁴

It is a possibility that Mr. Reyes was present during a Judicial Review²⁵ (JR) hearing for the Child on November 23, 2010; however, if he was present, he is unable to recall what

¹⁵ FSN records reflect that on December 28, 2010, Mr. Oeding documented Chronological Note ID #119051820 "Review-Supervisory."

¹⁶ Case Note ID #118284637 reflects that on November 10, 2010, Mr. Corej documented "a new Case Plan with the goal of Permanent Guardianship was filed...CHS will link with the current foster parent and discuss the benefits of a Permanent Guardianship Agreement."

¹⁷ Later determined to be prior to December 28, 2010; the date on which he documented the supervisory review.

¹⁸ Mr. Oeding stated that this was his last communication with the Foster Parent.

¹⁹ Mr. Oeding provided no explanation as to why he did not inform anyone of this.

²⁰ Mr. Oeding provided no explanation as to why he did not confirm the information with the Foster Parent.

²¹ According to FSN records, Mr. Ferrer documented that he conducted two home visits at the Foster Parent's residence: November 5, 2010 and December 9, 2010.

²² Case Note ID #118772289 reflects that Mr. Ferrer documented that on December 9, 2010, he conducted a home visit with the Child at the residence of the Foster Parent and that the Child's permanency "GOAL IS APPLA."

²³ As previously noted, Mr. Ferrer was involved with the Child's case during November 2010 and December 2010.

²⁴ Mr. Reyes stated that he has been the Child's volunteer Attorney ad Litem for over five years.

transpired. Because he is not an expert in dependency proceedings, it is possible that a new case plan with a goal of PG was entered into.²⁶ Sometime during the beginning of 2011 (exact date unknown²⁷), he received e-mail correspondence from Mr. Corej advising him that the Foster Parent became the Child's PG, that she (the Foster Parent) understood the requirements and was content with this arrangement, and that the Child's CHS case was closed. He (Mr. Reyes) subsequently spoke with the Child (exact date unknown) and advised him (the Child) of this, to which the Child responded that he (the Child) was surprised. Because of the Child's reaction, he (Mr. Reyes) subsequently sent e-mail correspondence to Mr. Corej [carbon-copied to Mr. Ferrer and Department Children's Legal Services²⁸ (CLS) Attorney Jessica Harrison; exact date unknown²⁹], requesting clarification concerning who had spoken with the Child about permanent guardianship and how the Child's benefits would be affected. He also requested that before permanent guardianship was finalized,³⁰ the "pros and cons of this arrangement" be clarified with the Foster Parent and the Child. On that same day, Mr. Corej responded via e-mail, confirming that he had spoken with the Child and the Foster Parent, who advised him (Mr. Corej) that they both agreed to the arrangement and were happy with it. However, Mr. Corej's response e-mail was "very vague" and failed to address specific details concerning his (Mr. Corej's) discussion with the Foster Parent and the Child.

He heard nothing further concerning the matter until sometime in June 2011 (exact date unknown). The Foster Parent made telephone contact with him and requested his assistance, as she advised him that she was no longer receiving the Child's foster care subsidy and that she still had not agreed to become the Child's PG. At that point, he contacted Our Kids administration (individual unknown).

Testimony of Circuit 11 Children's Legal Services (CLS) Attorney Jessica Harrison

Sometime during November 2010 or December 2010 (exact date unknown), Ms. Harrison received telephone contact from Mr. Corej relating to her that the Foster Parent agreed to become the Child's PG. At that time, she advised Mr. Corej to confirm this with the Foster Parent once more to ensure that she was "on board," as she would no longer receive the Child's benefits. Mr. Corej reassured her that the Foster Parent fully agreed to the arrangement. During the JR hearing on January 4, 2011, Mr. Corej represented to the Court that the Foster Parent had agreed to become the Child's PG, and she (Ms. Harrison) offered this as a reason why the Foster Parent was not required to attend.³¹ She subsequently received e-mail correspondence (exact date unknown³²)

²⁵ Hearing wherein the Court must make findings regarding the likelihood of a child's reunification with the parent or legal custodian within 12 months after the removal of a child from the home.

²⁶ Case Note ID #118508301, documented by Mr. Corej on November 23, 2010, reflects that Mr. Reyes was present for a JR hearing, during which a case plan with a goal of permanent guardianship was accepted by the Court.

²⁷ Later determined to be January 6, 2011.

²⁸ The Department's law firm representing the State of Florida in child welfare matters.

²⁹ Later determined to be an e-mail sent by Mr. Reyes to Mr. Corej on January 6, 2011.

³⁰ Mr. Reyes related that he was advised (individual unknown) that although permanent guardianship was granted to the Foster Parent, the final order had not been filed.

³¹ Ms. Harrison noted that only she and Mr. Corej were present during the hearing on January 4, 2011.

³² Later determined to be January 6, 2011.

from the Child's attorney, Mr. Reyes, inquiring about the stipulations of permanent guardianship; adding that this indicated to her there may be possible concerns. She responded to Mr. Reyes and provided the requested information to him as well as sent an e-mail to Mr. Corej, advising him to again confirm the arrangement with the Foster Parent. Due to the conflicting information between the individuals involved, she wanted to ensure that all parties were in agreement and therefore waited to file the final order of permanent guardianship until February 24, 2011.³³ She assumed the situation had been resolved, since she received no further complaints or questions.

She is aware that contracted agencies "push" for children to have a permanency goal of adoption or guardianship if reunification is not feasible; however, she is not aware of agency employees pressuring foster parents to become PGs.

Testimony of Our Kids Southern Region Manager Greg Penn

If the goal of permanent guardianship is entered into a case plan, the case should be staffed with Our Kids to discuss a child's future goals; however, he noted that this is not a requirement for every case. DCMs are responsible for providing PGs with a Subsidized Permanent Guardian³⁴ (SPG) application so they may apply to receive a subsidy, as they will no longer receive a foster care subsidy. Once the PG completes the SPG application, the DCM submits it to Our Kids and a staffing is held to determine if a subsidy will be approved.³⁵ Although SPG applications are not always approved, in his experience, PGs at least complete the SPG application, as they usually require financial assistance from the agency.³⁶

Concerning the Child's case, sometime during June 2011 or July 2011 (exact date unknown), he received telephone contact from the Foster Parent, informing him that she was no longer receiving a foster care subsidy. Upon researching the matter, he determined that the case had been closed in January 2011 (exact date unknown³⁷) with a goal of permanent guardianship, there had been no staffing and no application for a subsidy had been submitted. Upon informing the Foster Parent of this, she related to him that she was unaware of what was going on with the case and that she never agreed to become the PG. He then e-mailed CHS Director Marcel Rivas, Ms. Fletcher and Mr. Corej (exact date unknown³⁸) to inform them that the situation needed to be resolved. It was subsequently determined by Our Kids and CHS that the case would be reopened.³⁹

³³ Ms. Harrison stated that although she continuously requested that Mr. Corej confirm with the Foster Parent that she (the Foster Parent) was "on board," she never directly spoke with the Foster Parent, as this was Mr. Corej's responsibility.

³⁴ Prior to becoming PGs, this application is submitted by foster parents to Our Kids in an attempt to obtain financial assistance to provide for children who are no longer receiving a foster care subsidy.

³⁵ Mr. Penn noted that DCMs and DCMs are usually present at the staffings.

³⁶ As previously noted, the Foster Parent related that she was never advised of the permanent guardianship arrangement or that she would need to complete an application for financial assistance once the Child's benefits ceased.

³⁷ As previously noted and confirmed by the OIG to be January 4, 2011.

³⁸ Later determined that on August 2, 2011, a conference call was held to discuss the Foster Parent's concerns.

³⁹ The Foster Parent advised that on October 13, 2011, upon the request of the Department, the Court reinstated the Child's dependency case and ordered that counseling and tutoring services be provided to the Child. However, according to the Foster Parent, these services were previously ordered for the Child but he never received them. The

Testimony of the Child

Sometime in the past (exact date unknown⁴⁰), Ms. Delgado asked him if he would be interested in the Foster Parent becoming his PG; however, Ms. Delgado neither explained the specifics of this arrangement nor did he agree that he wanted the Foster Parent to become his PG. Mr. Corej subsequently began conducting home visits at the Foster Parent's residence (exact dates unknown⁴¹), during which he (Mr. Corej) suggested the possibility of the Foster Parent becoming his (the Child's) PG and asked how he (the Child) felt about the arrangement.⁴² Mr. Corej never explained the specifics of permanent guardianship to them (the Child and the Foster Parent) and at no time did the Foster Parent indicate to Mr. Corej that she was agreeable to become his (the Child's) PG. He did not advise Mr. Corej that he wanted the Foster Parent to become his PG or that he (the Child) was happy with the arrangement after it was so ordered.

Testimony of CHS Court Liaison Joseph Corej

On June 18, 2015, the OIG Investigator telephoned and left a voicemail message for Mr. Corej at his most recent telephone number according to Accurint,⁴³ in an attempt to obtain an interview with Mr. Corej. On June 25, 2015, the OIG Investigator telephoned and left a second voicemail message for Mr. Corej at the same number. Mr. Corej has not responded to the OIG Investigator.

OIG Records Review**Order Placing Child(ren) in a Permanent Guardianship and Terminating Protective Supervision (Permanent Guardianship Order)**

The OIG Investigator reviewed the Permanent Guardianship Order, as reflected below, in pertinent part:

"THIS MATTER came on to be heard on 1/4/11, upon the motion of the Department of Children and Families (the Department) for an order placing the child(ren) in a permanent guardianship and terminating protective supervision and/or judicial review/permanency review..."

1. "The following persons were noticed of the above hearing and appeared as follows:

DCF attorney

Jessica Harrison, Esq.

Other(s)

Joseph Corej (CHS Court liaison)"

9. "The proposed permanent guardian, [REDACTED], is suitable and able to provide a safe and permanent home for the child(ren), [the Child]."

Foster Parent related that she began receiving the Child's retroactive foster care subsidy and Medicaid benefits on October 19, 2011.

⁴⁰ The Child stated that this occurred prior to Ms. Delgado being employed with CHS.

⁴¹ Determined to be sometime after October 10, 2010; the date on which Ms. Delgado was no longer employed with CHS.

⁴² The Child related that Mr. Corej suggested the arrangement of permanent guardianship in the presence of both the Foster Parent and himself (the Child).

⁴³ Accurint® is a LexisNexis® Internet service that provides access to data records on individuals and businesses.

“ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that:

3. The child(ren), [the Child] is/are hereby placed in the permanent guardianship of [REDACTED] ...”

“DONE AND ORDERED on this 24th day of February, 2011 at, Miami-Dade County, Florida.”

Transcript of the Judicial Review Hearing on January 4, 2011

A review by the OIG Investigator of the transcripts from the January 4, 2011 hearing revealed the following recorded testimony, in pertinent parts:

“APPEARANCES:

STEVEN LIEBERMAN
GENERAL MAGISTRATE

On Behalf of the [Department]:
JESSICA HARRISON, ATTORNEY

ALSO PRESENT:

THE CASE MANAGER⁴⁴

(Appearing Telephonically)
JAVIER REYES, PRIVATE ATTORNEY

THE CASE MANAGER: **...I met with her personally. I explained the whole benefits of this and she agreed to it.**⁴⁵ And just so happened...

MS. HARRISON: She being the caregiver.

THE CASE MANAGER: Correct. Right...

M. LIEBERMAN: Is this what [the Child] wants? This...

THE CASE MANAGER: **Absolutely. I was with [the Child] all -- the last two hearings** actually.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: **So [the Child's] not going to be entitled to any money or anything, right, because he-- you're closing with...**

THE CASE MANAGER: **[The Foster Parent] gets a -- she gets a board rate still.**⁴⁶
The foster parent.

MS. HARRISON: [The Foster Parent].

THE CASE MANAGER: **Yeah. [The Child's] regular benefits. He gets the RTI benefit, educations.**⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The transcripts do not identify the name of the “CASE MANAGER”; however, according to the “Order Placing Child(ren) in a Permanent Guardianship,” and confirmed by Ms. Harrison's testimony, she and Mr. Corej were the only individuals on behalf of the Child who were present during the JR hearing on January 4, 2011.

⁴⁵ Bold type added for emphasis.

⁴⁶ As previously noted, the Foster Parent stated that she was never advised of this.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: Okay. **So you want to close it with permanent guardianship?**

THE CASE MANAGER: Correct.

MS. HARRISON: Yes, Your Honor.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: Okay. I'll close it with permanent guardianship. Okay.

THE CASE MANAGER: Thank you.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: All right. We're going to close this case with permanent guardianship.

(The following is a telephone conversation with Mr. Reyes)

G.M. LIEBERMAN: ...[Ms. Harrison and the Case Manager] came in and said everything was fine and that they wanted to close the case with a permanent guardianship.

MR. REYES: A permanent guardianship.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: ..., I went ahead and I closed it with permanent guardianship...

MR. REYES: Yes. That's -- so then there's going to be permanent guardianship based in the agency that he's at?⁴⁸

G.M. LIEBERMAN: Yeah, he's going to be living where he's at and they're going to -- and those folks will become his permanent guardian. He's going to be 17 this year, right? In April he'll be 17...So I went ahead and closed the case with permanent guardianship. There are no more future court dates. Basically, the case is over...

MR. REYES: Well, there was some confusion the last time because they had switched over from some --from guardianship from different agencies, so -- but that's good. And that -- was [the Child] present?

G.M. LIEBERMAN: No, he wasn't.

MR. REYES: Okay. I'll just call and confirm with [the Child] to make sure everything is good.

G.M. LIEBERMAN: Okay.

- According to the Foster Parent, because of the fact that she was not advised of the permanent guardianship arrangement, she would not have been informed that in order to receive financial assistance upon becoming the Child's PG, she would have to complete an application and submit it to Our Kids.

Juvenile Division, Case History Docket Notes

A review by the OIG Investigator of the docket notes from the November 23, 2010 hearing revealed the following, in pertinent parts:

⁴⁷ As previously noted, the Child's monthly foster care subsidy and Medicaid benefits ceased upon the Foster Parent becoming the Child's PG.

⁴⁸ According to Mr. Reyes, he believed the permanent guardianship arrangement was based with the agency, rather than with the home of the Foster Parent, and that the Child's benefits would not be affected.

Math/Reading tutor to be in place...

Testimony of Miami Beach Senior High School Assistant Principal Chandrell Larkin

To date, there are no records indicating that the Child received any tutoring services from Miami Beach Senior High School. During the 2010-2011 school year, the Child failed four out of his eight classes. The school has been unable to evaluate the Child's educational level, as he was absent approximately one-third of the 2010-2011 school year.

Review of FSFN Case ID #111868 Documentation

The OIG Investigator reviewed FSFN records, which revealed that according to Chronological Notes documented by Ms. Delgado, Mr. Ferrer, and Mr. Oeding, dated October 4, 2010 through December 23, 2010, the Child's permanency goal was consistently understood and documented to be APPLA, as reflected below:

- Case Note ID #117673338,⁴⁹ "Home Visit-Child's Current Residence," documented by **Ms. Delgado** on October 4, 2010, reflects the
" . . . Goal is APPLA..."
- Case Note ID #118772289, "Home Visit-Child's Current Residence," documented by **Mr. Ferrer** on December 9, 2010, reflects *" . . . THE GOAL IS APPLA..."*
- Case Note ID #119051820,⁵⁰ "Reviews-Supervisory," documented by **Mr. Oeding** on **December 28, 2010**, reflects:

*. . . the case plan for [the Child] is APPLA . . . previous [Dependency Case Manager] discuss . . . permanent guardianship but they states [sic] they are willing to provide a house and a family until his age of majority but **not with legal guardianship**⁵¹ or adoption...*

Information contained in the following FSFN records, documented by Mr. Corej from November 2, 2010 through January 4, 2011, conflicts with information contained in the above-noted FSFN records, documented by the other parties involved in the Child's case, as reflected below:

- Case Note ID #118159159, "Note to File-Legal," documented by Mr. Corej on November 2, 2010, reflects:

...The Goal is APPLA and is current through June 2011. CHS is expected to prepare a new Case Plan with the goal of Permanent Guardianship...

⁴⁹ This case note reflects the last home visit conducted by Ms. Delgado and indicates that at the time of this visit, the Child's permanency goal was APPLA.

⁵⁰ Mr. Oeding stated that prior to completion of the above-noted supervisory review, he made telephone contact with the Foster Parent to clarify whether or not she was interested in becoming the Child's PG, due to conflicting information reflected in FSFN records. According to Mr. Oeding, the Foster Parent advised him that she was not interested in becoming the Child's PG.

⁵¹ Bold type added for emphasis.

- Case Note ID #118284637, "Note to File-Legal," documented by Mr. Corej on November 10, 2010, reflects:

...A new Case Plan with the goal of Permanent Guardianship was filed, but the court reserved on accepting the goal change until the child had time to discuss the change with [Mr. Reyes] . . . CHS will link with [the Foster Parent] and discuss the benefits of a Permanent Guardianship Agreement...

- Case Note ID #118508301, "Note to File-Legal," documented by Mr. Corej on November 23, 2010, reflects:

...The Case Plan with the goal of Permanent Guardianship was accepted and is current through 11/10/11. CHS linked with [the Foster Parent] and discussed the benefits of a Permanent Guardianship Agreement. In short, [the Foster Parent] will care for [the Child] under that goal...

- Case Note ID #119146869, "Note to File-Legal," documented by Mr. Corej on January 4, 2011, reflects a JR hearing granting permanent guardianship:

...[The Foster Parent] has agreed to caring for [the Child] under a Permanent Guardianship Agreement. This writer has spoke with [the Foster Parent] and explained the benefits of the agreement. The Case Plan with the appropriate goal was submitted on 11/10/10 . . . Without objection, the court closed the case this date. There are no future hearings. I will complete the discharge. [sic]

Lotus Notes E-mail Correspondence

The OIG Investigator obtained e-mail correspondence from a review of Ms. Harrison's Lotus Notes e-mail account concerning the issue of permanent guardianship, sent from Mr. Reyes to Mr. Corej and carbon-copied to Ms. Harrison and Mr. Ferrer at 3:57 p.m. on January 6, 2011, as reflected below:

*I just spoke with [the Child] and he seemed surprised that the order was already being drafted for permanent guardianship . . . Who sat down with [the Child] to explore these issues, so that I can discuss this with them directly? . . . I also spoke with [Ms. Harrison], and my understanding is that the order is not finalized and has not been entered. Before it is, I want to be clear on the pros and cons of this arrangement . . . I also want to be certain that permanent guardianship does not affect any of the independent living benefits...*⁵²

⁵² According to Mr. Reyes, he is certain that at no time did Mr. Corej ever advise him that the Child's benefits would cease upon the Foster Parent becoming the Child's PG.

According to Mr. Reyes, he received a reply e-mail from Mr. Corej at 4:02 p.m. on that same date, which stated, "...I spoke with [the Child] and [the Foster Parent] about this. [The Child] stated he is happy..." Mr. Reyes did not provide additional details concerning the content of the e-mail.⁵³

RISK ASSESSMENT

With the assistance of Mr. Penn, the OIG conducted a Risk Assessment to determine if any similar issues occurred. Mr. Penn advised that from July 2010 through present, five SPG applications were submitted by CHS to Our Kids, indicating that five CHS foster parents were considering the permanent guardian arrangement and submitted the applications to receive a subsidy. Of the five dependency cases, two cases were assigned to Mr. Corej. Testimony obtained from the caregivers involved in both cases revealed that the permanent guardianship arrangement had not been finalized, that they (the caregivers) had not been made fully aware of details concerning the permanent guardianship arrangement, and that they (the caregivers) were not familiar with Mr. Corej.

INSPECTOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

Based on testimony obtained and records reviewed, the allegation that Children's Home Society, Inc. Court Liaison Joseph Corej falsified child protective records and misrepresented to the Dependency Court that a foster parent agreed to become a foster child's permanent guardian, resulting in the foster child being deprived of court-ordered tutoring, is **supported**. FSFN records reflect that from November 2, 2010 through January 4, 2011, Mr. Corej documented Chronological Notes indicating that the Foster Parent was interested in permanent guardianship, that a new case plan with the goal of permanent guardianship was entered, and that the Foster Parent agreed to become the Child's permanent guardian. Transcripts of the January 4, 2011 Judicial Review hearing reflect that Mr. Corej stated to the General Magistrate that he (Mr. Corej) "met with [the Foster Parent] personally...explained the whole [sic] benefits...and she agreed to it." Additionally, testimony obtained from CHS Dependency Case Manager Supervisor Guillermo Oeding, CHS Dependency Case Manager Sergio Ferrer, Attorney ad Litem Javier Reyes and Department CLS Attorney Jessica Harrison indicated that Mr. Corej represented that the Foster Parent agreed to become the Child's PG, although this was inaccurate and contradictory to the Child's longstanding permanency goal, as documented in FSFN. Furthermore, according to the Foster Parent and the Child, Mr. Corej neither discussed details of permanent guardianship with them (the Foster Parent and the Child) nor did they advise Mr. Corej that they agreed to the arrangement.

The OIG recommends that the Southern Regional Managing Director review the findings of this Investigation; provide a copy of this Investigative Report to the management of Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. and the management of Children's Home Society, Inc.; and ensure that a copy of this report is placed in Mr. Corej's personnel file.

⁵³ Mr. Reyes did not wish to provide this correspondence to the OIG Investigator.

In accordance with §20.055(6)(c), Florida Statutes (F.S.), on October 13, 2011, this investigation was coordinated with the State Attorney's Office (11th Judicial Circuit), in and for Miami-Dade County, for consideration of prosecution of possible criminal violation of §839.13(2)(a) and (c), F.S. (Falsifying Records). On that date, the State Attorney's Office advised that the case would be considered for criminal prosecution and requested that a complete copy of the final Investigative Report and supporting documentation be provided upon completion of investigation by the OIG. On June 8, 2015, the State Attorney's Office advised that they would not pursue prosecution of this case.

In compliance with § 20.055(6)(e), F.S., a copy of this report was provided to Mr. Corej on August 17, 2015. No response was received from Mr. Corej.

This investigation has been conducted in accordance with the ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL Principles & Quality Standards for Investigations.